

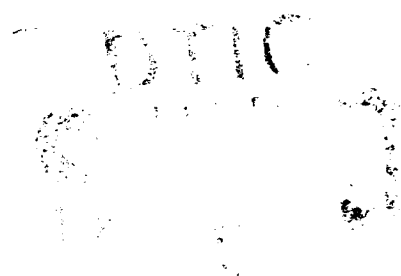
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# AIR WAR COLLEGE

## RESEARCH REPORT

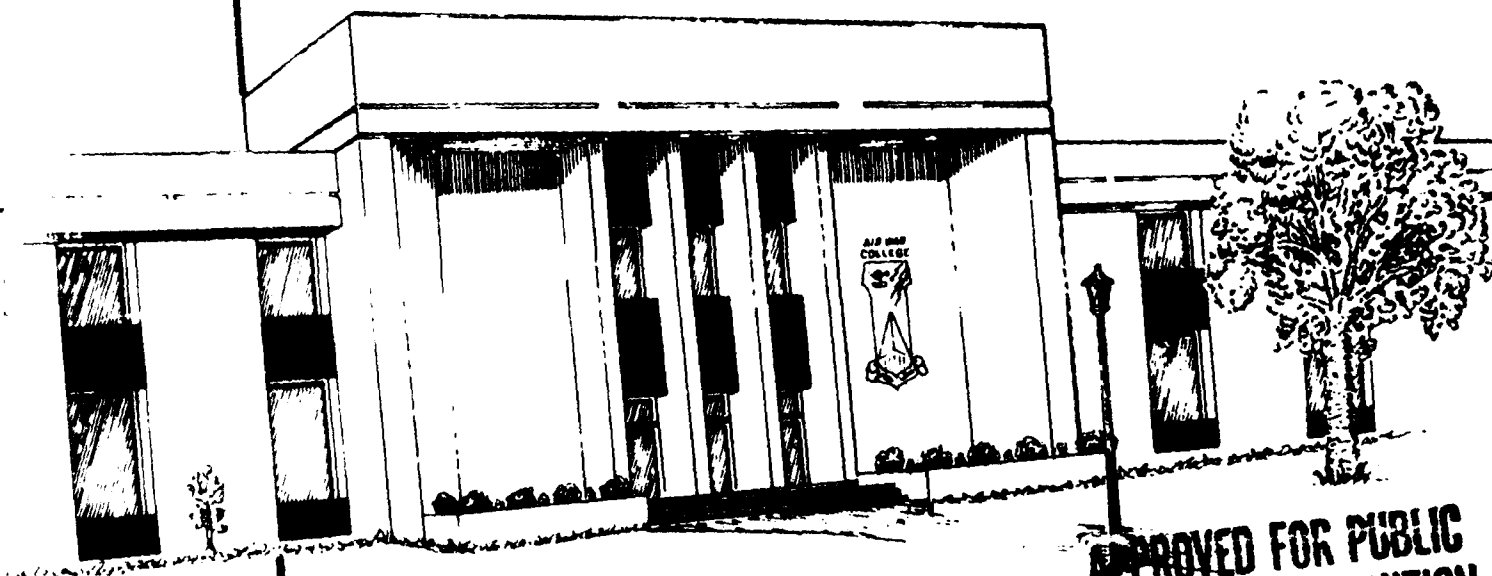
OFFICER CLUBS--OPTIONS FOR SURVIVAL



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1990



AIR UNIVERSITY  
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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AIR WAR COLLEGE

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OFFICER CLUBS--OPTIONS FOR SURVIVAL

by

John F. Regni  
Colonel, USAF

A DEFENSE ANALYTICAL STUDY SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

IN

FULFILLMENT OF THE CURRICULUM  
REQUIREMENT



Advisor: Lt Colonel James M. Spain

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TITLE: Officer Clubs--Options For Survival

AUTHOR: John F. Regni, Colonel, USAF

Congress has directed that no appropriated dollars can be used for officer clubs after 1 October 1990. Instead, clubs must be run as self-sustaining businesses meeting all their financial obligations from non-appropriated sources primarily from membership dues, fees, and charges. The impacts of no appropriated support will be felt in several areas: a reduction of \$25.9M Air Force-wide in operating capital that in prior years came from appropriated sources; a deletion of appropriated military and general service employee authorizations from clubs; all utilities, equipment, and supplies must be purchased with non-appropriated dollars; and in the long term, construction of new club facilities must be funded with non-appropriated dollars.

Prior to drawing conclusions, this paper samples a cross section of the Air Force officers in the grades of captain, major, lieutenant colonel and colonel. The primary purpose of the survey was to determine from the user's perspective why and how officer clubs are important, how often and for what events are clubs used, and to identify deficiencies or drawbacks in club operations and recommendations for improvement. The survey results show that 92% of the active duty officers are members of an officer club, yet

very few use the club for official or social events. Lunch (2.6), check cashing (1.8) and social drinking (1.4) are the only activities that average more than one visit to the club per month. All others events from dinner to dancing to official/protocol events average less than one visit each month. When asked to rank reasons for clubs the officers state clubs are most important as a place for official protocol events--yet the second most stated response is officer clubs are not important today.

This paper attempts to answer the question do we need officer clubs? Clearly, there are traditional and institutional reasons for having officer clubs. Based on the survey responses, clubs are important, from highest to lowest need, when an officer is temporary duty to a different base, when serving an isolated tour of duty, when serving an accompanied overseas tour, and lastly for those officers stationed in the United States. The low use rates signal clubs are not meeting officers' social needs, and several explanations are offered. Changes in the demographics of the officer corps indicate a different lifestyle from what could have been labelled a typical officer and his family. Full-time working spouses, residing off base, owning their own homes, and being more integrated into a civilian community paint a picture of an officer and his family's social needs being met more by the civilian sector and less by the traditional military community. These same trends also indicate a possible shift in organizational thinking from one heavily weighted toward the institutional Air Force to one more balanced between

institutionalism and occupationalism.

Having identified the challenges, the paper explores a range of options for officer clubs. First it proposes a revised and more narrow mission for clubs. Next it offers recommendations in two general areas (improve club management and increase club use) to make the present system financially solvent and survivable. Failing individual profitable clubs, the paper offers commanders a sequence of options to consider: scaling back club operations, collocation of officer and noncommissioned officer clubs in one facility, contracting club operations to a commercial firm, and closing a club that cannot survive under any of the above arrangements. The paper concludes with a new concept for meeting most of the present day missions of clubs by establishing a conference center that houses billeting, a conference facility, a base restaurant and lounges. In this setting, an officer club may well revert to an officer lounge, more along the lines of how officer clubs began a century ago.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Colonel John F. Regni began his Air Force career in 1973 as a base personnel officer working at consolidated base personnel offices in the ConUS and overseas. His most recent assignment prior to Air War College was deputy base commander, where he worked extensively in Morale, Welfare and Recreation including officer, noncommissioned and airmen open messes. His additional assignments include staff tours at the Air Force Military Personnel Center, at Headquarters United States Air Force in manpower and personnel, and at Headquarters Air Training Command. Colonel Regni is a graduate of the Air War College, class of 1990.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The Congress of the United States dealt the Air Force Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) program its greatest challenge when it directed that officer and noncommissioned officer (NCO) open messes operate as business activities and receive no appropriations after 1 October 1990.

Officer and noncommissioned officer "clubs" receive and have grown to rely on appropriated dollars to conduct their varied programs. In fiscal year 1988, officer clubs received \$25.9 million in appropriated dollars, using these monies to offset some personnel costs, most utilities, some facility improvements, and selected equipment and supply requirements. During the same year officer clubs used \$69.6 million of non-appropriated dollars to cover operating expenses--the result: a combined profit of only \$2.3 million. (7:1)

After 1 October 1990 clubs will be expected to be profitable while receiving no appropriated dollars. Given the same level of operations as in FY88, this \$2.3 million profit would have been a \$23.6 million shortfall. Losses at individual base clubs can no longer be tolerated, and would be made up with non-appropriated dollars in the form of higher dues and charges to

the club patrons.

Major changes in the club's traditional roles, operations, configuration, pricing, or management will be necessary to survive as a financially sound business. This paper deals with these challenges in the officer open mess arena. Following a brief discussion of the background of officer clubs, this paper examines the impact of operating without appropriated dollars, samples officer attitudes towards officer clubs, and attempts to answer a difficult question--do we need officer clubs? This paper concludes with three options for club operations after 1990: improving management of officer clubs, dealing with unprofitable clubs, and a new concept to meet base and officer needs.

## CHAPTER II

### BACKGROUND

#### Origin and Purpose

The following extract from an Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Force Management and Personnel letter to the Congress outlines the basis for military clubs.

Unity is a key element in the effectiveness of military organizations. It has been achieved historically by good leaders, a sense of responsibility toward fellow members of one's unit, and by such broader influences as patriotism, dedication to ideals and a desire to serve. As the framework of military operations became formalized with the emergence of modern military forces, other elements grew to support and foster this unity and cohesiveness. The messes of certain of the European regiments...represented one such element. Closeness engendered by socializing and dining together as a unit helped knit the unit together. The United States military services modeled their messes after the European system, but over the years closed messes have given way to open messes, which serve a somewhat different purpose: helping to bind the entire military community by extending the availability of the mess to families and civilian employees. (2:5 and 6)

Officer clubs have their roots from the early days of the United States military where forts and posts were on the frontier, isolated from the general populace by great distances and limited transportation. Clubs were small rooms in the forts, or more likely, tar paper shacks--only the permanent installations had clubs similar to what we are accustomed to today. As the military expanded its ranks and bases during world wars, the need for

improved social settings became apparent. By 1944, the War Department formally established clubs as wholly-owned federal instrumentalities. While this action allowed for some appropriations, clubs would be self-supporting through the collection of dues and sale of goods and services such as food, drinks, and entertainment. (16:1)

From these humble beginnings the Air Force officer club network has grown to 111 clubs. Additionally, 24 bases have a consolidated officer and non-commissioned officer club. (3:1 and 16:9) The Air Force maintains this club system (and an additional 124 non-commissioned officer and airmen clubs) to meet three basic missions: provide for wartime or emergency messing and essential feeding; provide an appropriate setting for base protocol, official functions and community events; and offer social recreation to members and guests. (1:5 and 16:2)

The first mission, wartime messing and essential feeding, emerged in the 1950s when the Air Force for economy reasons phased out officer field ration messes. By doing so the Air Force saved resources in several areas--between 2,500 and 3,500 manpower spaces in food service, reduced the number and sizes of appropriated facilities that had to be constructed and maintained, and avoided per diem increases by relying on open messes as essential feeding facilities. Essential feeding facilities could be readily converted to wartime or contingency officer messes should the need arise. Accordingly, appropriated funds were permitted for basic construction of the officer open mess as well

as messing equipment and non-perishable supplies. (16:2 and 8:Atch 1 pp. 2)

The second mission as a location for suitable protocol, community and official events is aimed at promoting a sense of belonging to the Air Force. Fostering institutional pride and improving esprit de corps, unit identity and readiness are goals of this mission. Officer clubs can provide a suitable location for commander calls, government and foreign receptions, base and civilian community relations activities and other official functions. (8:Atch 1 pp.3)

The last major mission area, social recreation, targets morale by providing a setting for commraderie with fellow officers and guests, or for individual or family leisure interests in dining, drinking, and entertainment. (8:Atch 1 pp. 3-4)

#### Membership Levels

Membership levels in officer clubs are difficult to pinpoint since they are not formally tracked. The Morale, Welfare and Recreation Directorate of the Air Force Military Personnel Center (AFMPC) does however receive information from the major commands and their bases, and estimates are 88% of eligible active duty officers are members. (10:n/a) For FY90, the Air Force has 107,698 officers on active duty. Sixty-four percent are company grade officers, majors account for 19% of the force, 12% are lieutenant colonels, and the remaining five percent are colonels and generals. (14:n/a) This 88% club membership translates to over 91,000 active duty members. Additionally Reserve, Guard,

retired officers, civilians with officer equivalent grades, and sister service officers on an Air Force base are frequently members. Clubs indeed provide services to a substantial number of officers.

### Congressional Guidance

During the 1980s, congressional committees urged the Department of Defense to constrain the level of appropriated support to MWR activities that generate revenues and could be largely self-supporting. (9:179) Usually, each urging was accompanied by a reduction in appropriated support for MWR, with the latest examples being reductions of \$67.5 million in FY87 and \$75 million in FY88 by the Committees on Appropriations of the House and the Senate, and another \$20 million in the FY88/89 Defense Authorization Act. (9:179) The Air Force recognized the changing climate and formed a study group to review MWR in detail. It proposed a realignment of MWR activities into four categories each needing different levels of appropriated funding. OSD accepted the Air Force proposal as a policy framework for all the services, and in 1987 submitted the following concept to the Appropriations Committees of the Congress. (2: Encl 2 pp. 1)

Category "A", or Mission Sustaining activities contained physical fitness centers, libraries, recreation centers and others that promote physical and mental well-being of service members. Because these directly support the mission, they would be supported almost entirely with appropriated dollars. Conversely,

non-appropriated dollars would be limited in these areas. (2: Encl 2 pp. 2)

Category "B", or Basic Community Support activities encompassed child development centers, arts and crafts, youth programs and others that satisfy the basic physiological and psychological needs of service members and their families. Support functions in these areas should receive a substantial amount of appropriated dollars with the remaining costs borne by non-appropriated monies. (2: Encl 2 pp. 2)

Category "C", labelled Enhanced Community Support, contained activities that had the potential to operate as businesses yet relied on some appropriations to operate. Military open messes fell into this category. (2: Encl 2 pp. 3)

The last tier, Category "D", contained Business Activities with the best potential to sustain themselves financially with no appropriations. Aeronautical clubs, golf courses, bowling centers, and marinas fell into this category. (2: Encl 2 pp. 3)

The Air Force began operating Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs under this four-tiered concept in fiscal year 1989. The Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives, however, directed additional changes to this concept. Citing that certain revenue-generating activities appear to be capable of operating with minimum levels of appropriated dollars, the Committee eliminated the Enhanced Community Support category by merging its individual activities into what they felt were more appropriate tiers. What remains are three tiers:

Mission Sustaining (A), Basic Community Support (B) and Business Activities (C). Under this new direction from the Congress and effective 1 October 1990, open messes are Business Activities that can receive no congressional appropriations. Not surprisingly, the Committee reduced the FY89 MWR budget \$28 million across the Department of Defense, (4:375) reflecting this lowered requirement for MWR activities that, in theory, can financially sustain themselves.



## CHAPTER III

### THE IMPACT OF NO APPROPRIATED FUNDING FOR CLUBS

#### Club Income and Expenses

From an Air Force level perspective, officer club management is big business. In Fiscal Year 1988, officer clubs generated \$112.5 million in sales and revenues. Expenses, on the other hand, were \$110.3M for a combined profit of only \$2.3M. (7:1) As previously mentioned, clubs received \$25.9M in appropriated dollars. Said another way, total expenses to operate officer clubs were \$136.2 million--or \$23.6M in the red. The following tables outline the major areas of income and expenditures, and the levels of non-appropriated (NAF) and appropriated (APF) dollars used in each. First, the sources of income for officer clubs during Fiscal Year 1988. (7:1)

<u>Item/Area</u>	<u>NAF (\$ Millions)</u>	<u>APF (\$M)</u>
Sale of Goods	77.134	0
Activity Revenues	30.651	0
Other Income	4.825	0
Total	112.610	0

Sale of Goods reflects the amount received for food and beverages in the dining and lounge areas, as well as mementos like

pewter plates. Activity Revenues were mostly from dues and assessments (\$23M). Slot machines at oversea clubs generated \$2.6M, while fees and charges for special events accounted for \$2.1M. Support service fees, concessions, amusement machines and instructional fees were lesser but important income generators. The Other Income category is predominately interest from the Air Force Welfare Board investment program (\$1.2M), operating grants from the welfare board system, profits from recycling programs, and delinquent accounts or returned checks.

The debit side of the ledger looks like this: (7:1)

Item/Area	NAF (\$M)	APF (\$M)
Cost of Sales	34.456	0
Personnel	50.077	9.279
Accounting	4.150	0
Materials	6.544	3.578
Utilities	.451	3.904
Entertainment	6.347	0
Other Operating Costs	2.055	1.337
Minor Construction	0	1.557
Facility Improvements	0	6.077
Miscellaneous	2.072	.227
Depreciation	4.160	0
Total	110.312	25.959

Cost of Sales represents the food and beverage purchases. Personnel costs cover both non-appropriated fund employees (waiters, waitresses, bartenders, night managers, caterers, cooks, dishwashers, busboys, janitors) and appropriated fund people (blue suit open mess management specialists, and depending on the size of the club, club manager and assistant club manager). Personnel costs include payroll (U.S. and foreign national), social security

and income taxes, insurance, retirement benefits and compensation programs.

Accounting costs reflect services by the NAF Financial Management Branch, civilian personnel services by the NAF branch of the base civilian personnel office, and credit card and computer services. Material expenses cover equipment and supply items for the kitchen (steam cookers, clipper, bun warmers, etc.), dining rooms (table linens, flatware, dishes, etc) and other club supplies like cleaning items.

Entertainment expenses include bands and other live shows, "happy hour" snacks, coupon use, membership nights, and advertising. Other operating expenses reflect costs for laundry of table linens, telephone service, rental charges, and unfortunately, \$70K in uncollected accounts and dishonored checks.

Minor construction and facility improvements are two areas where appropriated funds use increased significantly in FY88. From 1985 to 1987, no APF were accounted for as "minor construction" yet \$1.5M went in this direction in FY88. "Facilities" grew from \$838K in FY85 to \$1.5M in FY87 to \$6M in FY88. It is important to note that the total level of direct appropriated support to officer clubs has remained constant during the same timeframe (from a low of \$25.4M in 1985 to a high of \$26.7M in 1987). Two factors account for the increases in APF for minor construction and facility improvements. Better reporting and accounting procedures for APF are now in place--these increases in construction and improvement costs are offset by

drastic reductions in an accounting category called "other services." Additionally, local commanders aware of the imminent changes in appropriated funding rules may have "invested" appropriated dollars in long term improvement areas of the club.

#### Impact of No Appropriated Support

The lack of appropriated dollars challenges club managers and commanders across several areas. With very few exceptions, clubs will be pay-as-you-go operations with all costs borne by the patrons.

First, all military personnel authorizations will be deleted from clubs. Not only does this take away key trained people whose personnel costs are now transparent to the club manager, but the Air Force loses a resource once thought to augment wartime feeding of troops. Replacements in the club for these military open mess specialists must be non-appropriated fund employees thereby raising the monthly payroll costs for local managers. Similarly, all civilian appropriated positions will be deleted, and in time all club managers will be on the NAF payroll. Those managers who elect to stay in their positions after 1 October 1990 will be "grandfathered" so their pay and benefits will remain intact, however the NAF system must reimburse the appropriated side at 135% of the salary to cover pay, leave, benefits, and retirement costs.

Other major financial impacts will be utilities and facility support. Presently virtually all utilities are paid with AFE. Civil Engineers either estimate, or more likely are now

metering each club to determine accurate utility consumption. These energy bills will become an added expense to the club directly affecting the profit or loss posture of the club. Another area involving civil engineer support is facility improvement, either in the form of minor construction or shop work. Any alteration work will be paid for with club monies, as will replacing worn items like carpets, drapes, wallpaper and even paint. Only work classified as "maintenance and repair," like a leaky roof or a broken pipe, can be fixed without a direct charge to the club. Outdoor grounds maintenance must also be paid for by the club.

All supplies and equipment must come from club monies, including expensive and essential kitchen equipment.

In the near term, these changes will directly affect each club's financial setting. There will be long term impacts as well, particularly in constructing new officer clubs. NAF money must be used for construction, and the new rules will likely decrease the levels of available NAF money for construction of clubs and other MWR activities like youth centers and child care centers. Conservatively, a new club in 1990 costs \$4 million. Presently, construction money is made available to a base through loans and grants. Loans of course must be repaid, usually with interest. Individual clubs then must not only be profitable, but must generate sufficient income to operate, cover depreciation of assets, plan for capital improvements, and repay any outstanding loans. Additionally, the pool of available NAF money at Air Force

level for grants may well shrink to the point that grants become a pleasant memory of days gone by.

Were clubs generally profitable today, these new rules could be absorbed with minor changes in management. The situation however is not healthy when \$112 million in sales and revenues translates to only a \$2.3 million profit. Asking clubs to absorb \$25 million in costs and still be profitable calls for major surgery--something has to give. Additional management efficiencies equating to \$23 million must be put into motion. If management efficiencies cannot reach this increased profit level then larger questions must be asked: Should individual and failing officer clubs be consolidated or collocated with non-commissioned officer clubs? Should commercial firms take over flailing clubs and operate them as a business? Should officer clubs that cannot support themselves be closed, or should the officer club system evolve to a new concept altogether? These questions and thoughts on possible answers will be reviewed in subsequent chapters.

## CHAPTER IV

### OFFICER ATTITUDES ON OFFICER OPEN MESSSES

Air Force students at the Air War College (AWC), Air Command and Staff College (ACSC), and Squadron Officer School (SOS) were surveyed to grasp officer attitudes toward club membership, usage, importance, quality of services, and management. The survey questions and their responses are listed below, followed by an analysis of the answers.

All 162 Air Force students of the 1990 Air War College class were asked to complete the survey. Two hundred of the 419 (48%) Air Force students of the 1990 Air Command and Staff College class were given surveys, as were 200 of the 788 (25%) Air Force students of Class 90-A of Squadron Officer School. Randomness at ACSC and SOS was considered by distributing surveys to their respective squadrons and flights. Since they are assembled by mixing command of assignment, rated status, functional specialty, sex, and other factors, surveying an entire ACSC squadron or SOS flight guaranteed randomness.

One hundred and thirty-six Air War College students completed the survey for an 84% return rate. ACSC response was lower at 57% (114 of 200). One hundred and fifty-four SOS

students responded for a 77% return rate. Below is the survey each was asked to complete.

Survey of Your Views - Why Do We Have Officer Clubs?

1. My present grade is \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I am on (a) active duty; (b) a guard or reserve tour of duty.
3. I have \_\_\_\_\_ years of commissioned service.
4. I have \_\_\_\_\_ years of prior enlisted service.
5. True or False. I was a member of the club at my last base.
6. I used that club how many times a month for:  
\_\_\_\_\_ official functions \_\_\_\_\_ social drinking  
\_\_\_\_\_ breakfast \_\_\_\_\_ lunch \_\_\_\_\_ dinner  
\_\_\_\_\_ dancing \_\_\_\_\_ check cashing
7. My last base is (a) in the CONUS; (b) overseas long;  
(c) overseas short.
8. Circle one answer only. The primary reason I think officer clubs are important is they
  - a. are essential feeding facilities.
  - b. contribute to unit identity, esprit de corps, and improved readiness.
  - c. improve morale and well-being of service members.
  - d. are suited for commander protocol, community, and official functions.
  - e. limit membership to officers and equivalents only.
  - f. provide social recreation.
  - g. provide a place for my peers to meet informally.
  - h. provide a place for senior and junior officers to mix informally
  - i. offer social activities cheaper than off-base.
  - j. I don't think officer clubs are important or necessary.
  - k. other: \_\_\_\_\_.
9. From the choices above, the secondary and tertiary reasons I think clubs are important is they \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
10. I enjoy myself when I go to the club: (a) strongly agree  
(b) agree (c) disagree (d) strongly disagree (e) I don't use the club.
11. Circle the letter in front of each sentence you agree with:
  - a. Club dining rooms offer good, affordable lunches.
  - b. Club dining rooms offer good, affordable dinners in a nice



- atmosphere.
- c. When I decide to go out for the evening I seriously consider the club.
  - d. While I am TDY, I rely on the club for eating and socializing.
  - e. With DWI emphasis, I use the bar and lounge areas less than I used to.
  - f. All officers should belong to their club.
  - g. Blue jeans and sneakers are appropriate dress for the bar and lounge.
  - h. Blue jeans and sneakers are appropriate dress for the dining room.
  - i. Club managers are quite capable of managing club assets and resources.
  - j. Profits from other MWR activities on base should be used to offset an unprofitable officer club.
12. True or False. I would belong to the club if monthly dues were \$25.
  13. You are now a wing commander. You would be concerned if membership in your base's club dropped to \_\_\_\_\_ per cent of eligible officers.
  14. True or False. You are still the wing commander. The officer club is losing money every month, with no change in sight. You would be in favor of consolidating with the NCO club. (officers and NCOs mixed together in the dining, dancing and drinking areas)
  15. True or False. Same question as # 14, but your consolidated club would have separate dining, dancing and drinking areas for officers and NCOs.
  16. What changes are needed to improve clubs so more officers would voluntarily use them?

#### Survey Responses

The survey responses for each pertinent question follows. The data is arrayed by school, and where important by last assignment of the officer. A section analyzing the answers and drawing conclusions will follow this listing of the data.

Membership " 5. I was a member of my club at my last base."

School	Total	ConUS	Overseas Long	Overseas Short
AWC:	119 (86%)	92 (85%)	23 (96%)	4 (100%)
ACSC:	107 (95%)	89 (95%)	17 (94%)	1* (100%)
SOS:	145 (94%)	116 (94%)	18 (90%)	11* (100%)

\* Both ACSC and SOS had one officer at a short tour location that had no officer open mess. They were excluded from this count.

Club Use " 6. I used that club how many times a month for "

School	Total (use per month)	ConUS	O/S Long	O/S Short
<u>Breakfast</u>				
AWC:	24 (0.2)	5 (0.1)	6 (0.3)	13 (3.3)
ACSC:	26 (0.2)	22 (0.2)	4 (0.2)	no valid data
SOS:	41 (0.3)	35 (0.3)	3 (0.2)	3 (0.3)
<u>Lunch</u>				
AWC:	317 (2.7)	232 (2.5)	39 (1.7)	46 (11.5)
ACSC:	280 (2.5)	210 (2.4)	70 (4.1)	no valid data
SOS:	451 (3.1)	342 (2.9)	74 (4.4)	35 (3.2)
<u>Dinner</u>				
AWC:	145 (1.2)	81 (0.9)	38 (1.7)	26 (6.5)
ACSC:	61 (0.5)	51 (0.6)	10 (0.6)	no valid data
SOS:	109 (0.8)	63 (0.5)	32 (1.9)	14 (1.3)
<u>Official Functions</u>				
AWC:	203 (1.7)	166 (1.8)	31 (1.3)	6 (2.5)
ACSC:	84 (0.8)	72 (0.8)	12 (0.7)	no valid data
SOS:	98 (0.7)	69 (0.6)	18 (1.1)	11 (1.0)
<u>Dancing</u>				
AWC:	26 (0.2)	13 (0.1)	6 (0.3)	7 (1.8)
ACSC:	17 (0.2)	13 (0.1)	4 (0.2)	no valid data
SOS:	35 (0.2)	18 (0.2)	15 (0.9)	2 (0.2)
<u>Social Drinking</u>				
AWC:	213 (1.8)	136 (1.5)	49 (2.1)	28 (7.0)
ACSC:	110 (1.0)	87 (1.0)	23 (1.4)	no valid data
SOS:	229 (1.6)	168 (1.4)	46 (2.7)	15 (1.4)
School	Total (use per month)	ConUS	O/S Long	O/S Short
<u>Check Cashing</u>				
AWC:	319 (1.8)	163 (1.8)	39 (1.7)	17 (4.3)
ACSC:	163 (1.5)	125 (1.4)	38 (2.2)	no valid data
SOS:	345 (2.4)	242 (2.1)	76 (4.5)	27 (2.5)

Importance of Clubs Questions 8, 9, and 10 asked why the officers

thought officer clubs are important. The data below indicates the number of times a reason was selected as the primary, secondary, or tertiary one for importance. The overall column shows the times a reason was selected in the top three. The data is sorted by most important to least important in the primary response. All officers selected a primary reason but some had blanks for the secondary or tertiary responses, usually following a primary response that clubs are not important. Blank responses were included in the percentage computations for the secondary and tertiary columns below.

School	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Overall
Suited for commander protocol, community, and official functions				
AWC:	61 (45%)	10 ( 7%)	18 (13%)	89 (25%)
ACSC:	43 (38%)	22 (19%)	15 (13%)	80 (25%)
SOS:	40 (26%)	23 (15%)	17 (11%)	80 (19%)
I don't think officer clubs are important or necessary				
AWC:	19 (14%)	5 ( 4%)	11 ( 8%)	35 (10%)
ACSC:	22 (19%)	9 ( 8%)	6 ( 5%)	37 (12%)
SOS:	20 (13%)	10 ( 6%)	14 ( 9%)	44 (11%)
Provide a place for senior and junior officers to mix informally				
AWC:	11 ( 8%)	22 (16%)	15 (11%)	48 (13%)
ACSC:	7 ( 6%)	10 ( 9%)	9 ( 8%)	26 ( 8%)
SOS:	22 (14%)	8 ( 5%)	17 (11%)	47 (11%)
Provide a place for my peers to meet informally				
AWC:	11 ( 8%)	22 (16%)	21 (15%)	54 (15%)
ACSC:	8 ( 7%)	21 (18%)	21 (18%)	50 (16%)
SOS:	17 (11%)	34 (22%)	23 (15%)	74 (18%)
Contribute to unit identity, esprit de corps, and improved readiness				
AWC:	11 ( 8%)	16 (12%)	5 ( 4%)	32 ( 9%)
ACSC:	14 (12%)	10 ( 9%)	4 ( 4%)	28 ( 9%)
SOS:	8 ( 5%)	16 (10%)	14 ( 9%)	38 ( 9%)

Provide social recreation

AWC:	6 ( 4%)	12 ( 9%)	17 (13%)	35 (10%)
ACSC:	7 ( 6%)	10 ( 9%)	11 (10%)	28 ( 9%)
SOS:	22 (14%)	14 ( 9%)	8 ( 5%)	44 (11%)
School	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Overall

Improve morale and well being of service members

AWC:	11 ( 8%)	9 ( 7%)	7 ( 5%)	27 ( 7%)
ACSC:	8 ( 7%)	9 ( 8%)	9 ( 8%)	26 ( 8%)
SOS:	9 ( 6%)	11 ( 7%)	6 ( 4%)	26 ( 6%)

Offer social activities cheaper than off-base

AWC:	2 ( 1%)	8 ( 6%)	9 ( 7%)	19 ( 5%)
ACSC:	4 ( 4%)	2 ( 2%)	6 ( 5%)	12 ( 4%)
SOS:	4 ( 3%)	9 ( 6%)	13 ( 8%)	26 ( 6%)

Other (write-in items: support while TDY, check cashing)

AWC:	1 ( 1%)	0	1 ( 1%)	2 ( 1%)
ACSC:	1 ( 1%)	4 ( 4%)	2 ( 2%)	7 ( 2%)
SOS:	4 ( 3%)	2 ( 1%)	3 ( 2%)	9 ( 2%)

Are essential feeding facilities

AWC:	1 ( 1%)	10 ( 7%)	3 ( 2%)	14 ( 4%)
ACSC:	0	8 ( 7%)	10 ( 9%)	18 ( 6%)
SOS:	5 ( 3%)	9 ( 6%)	6 ( 4%)	20 ( 5%)

Limit membership to officers and equivalents only

AWC:	2 ( 1%)	4 ( 3%)	2 ( 1%)	8 ( 2%)
ACSC:	0	3 ( 3%)	4 ( 4%)	7 ( 2%)
SOS:	3 ( 2%)	3 ( 2%)	3 ( 2%)	9 ( 2%)

Statements on Club Activities The questions and responses above concerned how many of the officers were members of their club at their prior bases, and how frequently and for which events they used that club. The following questions are general in nature and do not necessarily pertain to the officer's prior club.

"10. I enjoy myself when I go to the club"

School	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Don't Use the Club
AWC:	12 ( 9%)	99 (73%)	11 ( 8%)	2 ( 1%)	12 ( 9%)
ACSC:	10 ( 9%)	76 (67%)	10 ( 9%)	5 ( 4%)	13 (11%)
SOS:	13 ( 8%)	101 (66%)	14 ( 9%)	7 ( 5%)	19 (12%)

Question 11 asked the officers to indicate which of the following sentences they agreed with:

Club dining rooms offer good, affordable lunches.

AWC: 93 (68%)      ACSC: 79 (69%)      SOS: 91 (59%)

Club dining rooms offer good, affordable dinners in a nice atmosphere.

AWC: 52 (38%)      ACSC: 44 (39%)      SOS: 52 (34%)

When I go out for the evening I seriously consider the club.

AWC: 14 (10%)      ACSC: 11 (10%)      SOS: 11 (7%)

While I am TDY, I rely on the club for eating and socializing.

AWC: 71 (67%)      ACSC: 60 (53%)      SOS: 70 (45%)

With DWI emphasis, I use the bar and lounge areas less than I used to.

AWC: 67 (49%)      ACSC: 48 (42%)      SOS: 35 (23%)

All officers should belong to their club.

AWC: 53 (39%)      ACSC: 35 (31%)      SOS: 27 (18%)

Blue jeans and sneakers are appropriate dress for the bar and lounge.

AWC: 76 (56%)      ACSC: 62 (54%)      SOS: 117 (76%)

Blue jeans and sneakers are appropriate dress for the dining room.

AWC: 24 (18%)      ACSC: 11 (10%)      SOS: 44 (29%)

Club managers are quite capable of managing club assets and resources.

AWC: 28 (21%)      ACSC: 27 (24%)      SOS: 28 (18%)

Profits from other MWR activities on base should be used to offset an unprofitable officer club.

AWC: 23 (17%)      ACSC: 23 (20%)      SOS: 35 (23%)

Increased Dues and Consolidation The remaining questions were hypothetical and asked for the officer's views on membership with higher dues and two forms of consolidation with non-commissioned officer clubs.

"12. I would belong to the club if monthly dues were \$25."

AWC: 70 (51%)      ACSC: 49 (46%)      SOS: 40 (27%)

"14. You are now a wing commander. The officer club is losing money, with no change in sight. You would be in favor of consolidating with the NCO club. (officers and NCOs mixed together in dining, dancing, and drinking areas)

AWC: 28 (21%)      ACSC: 24 (22%)      SOS: 45 (31%)

"15. Same question as # 14, but your consolidated club would have separate dining, dancing, and drinking areas for officers and NCOs.

AWC: 73 (54%)      ACSC: 57 (52%)      SOS: 83 (57%)

#### Analysis of Survey Data

Certain conclusions can be drawn from the survey data. For ease of discussion they are grouped in these areas: membership issues, club use, club importance, consolidation, and manager capability.

Membership Issues The survey participants showed very strong membership support in their prior assignment officer clubs. The lowest membership rate, 88% at Air War College, equalled the Air Force overall membership rate. ACSC and SOS rates at 95% and 94% exceeded the 88% Air Force average. Short tour locations had 100% membership where a club was available. Long tour overseas membership was 96%, 94% and 90% for Air War College, Air Command and Staff College and Squadron Officer School respectively.

Not surprisingly, the more senior the officer, the more inclined he or she thinks all officers should be members of their club. Thirty-nine percent of Air War College students, 31% of ACSC, and 18% of SOS students feel all officers should belong. This trend is likely due to several factors. Squadron Officer School students have between four and seven years of commissioned

service and many have not decided on the Air Force as a career. Intermediate and senior service school students have made their career decisions and are more apt to view club membership as part of the profession. On the other hand, pressure from commanders to join, whether overt or subtle, forms for some a negative feeling toward mandating club membership. This could account for the fact that 39% is the highest affirmative category in this answer. Finally, officers may have felt that mandating club membership can be counter to encouraging club use.

Raising monthly dues is a quick way for a club to generate more operating dollars. A significant increase, however, would have a backlash effect on club membership. If dues were raised to \$25 a month the survey indicated more officers would elect not to belong to their club. Fifty-one percent of the AWC students would continue to be members while only 46 and 27 percent of the ACSC and SOS students would join. It is significant that half of the senior officers (at least said they) would not belong. This question generated many margin comments along the lines of "I would never get \$300 a year use out of a club...I would need at least a \$20 return to feel it was worth it...dues should be lowered, not raised...do away with dues and raise prices to cover actual costs of what individuals use." Club managers and commanders need to seriously consider the downside of increasing dues before summarily raising them to generate income.

Club Use While club membership is high for the survey participants, use of the clubs is extremely low. Short tour areas

enjoy the most use, and long tour bases have slightly higher use than stateside clubs. Across the spectrum of activities however, the facts reveal very low club use--ConUS or overseas.

The most popular club event is lunch, with club members from Air War College averaging 2.7 lunches a month at their last club. ACSC club members average 2.5 while SOS members had 3.1 lunches a month. Lunches at overseas clubs are more frequent, averaging four visits per month. The second most used feature is check cashing at 1.8, 1.5, and 2.4 times a month for AWC, ACSC, and SOS students. Check cashing at overseas clubs is more common averaging over three checks a month, most likely due to the convenience and availability of banking services overseas. The only other activity that averages one or more visits a month for all three schools is social drinking at 1.8, 1.0, and 1.6 times a month for AWC, ACSC, and SOS students. Social drinking at an overseas club is more common, averaging nearly three visits a month.

The remaining club activities listed on the survey had less than one use per month per club member. Breakfast is the lowest at 0.2 visits a month, or once every five months. Dancing had similarly low usage at 0.2, and this low rate was surprisingly the same for company grade officers as well as field graders. Dinner at the club averaged 1.2 times a month for Air War College students, 0.5 for Air Command and Staff, and 0.8 for Squadron Officer School students. Dining at overseas clubs at long tour locations is slightly higher at 1.7, 0.6, and 1.9 visits by AWC,



ACSC, and SOS survey participants. Short tour dinner use ranged from 1.6 to 6.5 times a month. Official function attendance averaged 1.7 for senior officers and 0.7 for majors and captains.

Several questions asked for views on club dining. Well over half of those surveyed agreed the club offered good, affordable lunches (68% of AWC, 69% of ACSC, and 59% of SOS). The approval rates dropped considerably when asked about good, affordable dinners in a nice atmosphere, with 38% AWC, 39% ACSC, and 34% SOS agreeing. The most revealing response may be that only 10% of AWC and ACSC, and only 7% of SOS officers consider going to the club when they go out for an evening.

These low rates for club use beg the question...why? Most officers enjoy themselves when they use the club as 82% of AWC, 76% of ACSC, and 74% of the SOS students surveyed either agreed or strongly agreed they enjoy themselves at the club--yet club use is curiously low. Nine percent of AWC, 13% of ACSC, and 14% of SOS officers didn't enjoy the club, and another 9%, 11%, 12% never used the club at all. Some clues to determine why clubs aren't seriously considered as an option for a night out, or for more use in general, are found in the write-in comments.

The predominant write-in comments on how to improve the club centered on five areas: improve food quality, improve service quality, remove the stuffy atmosphere, improve club management, and cater more activities to company grade officers. The first three areas would explain why clubs aren't sought out for evening entertainment--depending on your location, better

food, service, and atmosphere can be found off base. Company grade officers strongly voiced several factors that contribute to a stuffy atmosphere. At some bases, company graders could not unwind at the club. Their impression is that it is a senior officer club and not a club for all officer ranks. Dress codes are too stiff. Some senior officers use the club as an informal inspection area, observing and correcting dress and behavior of the junior officers. Many voiced that if senior officers couldn't "take off their rank" and allow uninhibited behavior at the bar then a separate casual bar with relaxed rules is in order--one where casual dress, flight suits, fatigues, loud music, and somewhat rowdy behavior would be permitted. Undue influence by the Officer Wives Club (OWC) and senior officer wives also generated some concerns. Some examples were steering the club advisory committee towards entertainment suitable to an older audience and enforcing or reporting to their senior officer husbands any dress or behavior practices not up to their personal standards. Other comments on OWC influence noted a seemingly continuous and expensive re-decoration of the club towards a more elegant setting. These factors, coupled with pressures to belong to the club, contribute to a stuffy atmosphere that younger officers tend to avoid.

Two questions asked for views on very casual attire in clubs--blue jeans and sneakers. Over half of the officers felt jeans and sneakers would be acceptable in the bar or lounge area with 56% of AWC, 54% of ACSC, and 76% of SOS students agreeing.

Approval of blue jeans and sneakers in the dining room dropped considerably to 18%, 10%, and 29%.

Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) awareness impacts drinking habits at the club. Nearly half of the Air War College officers (49%), 42% of the Air Command and Staff officers, and 23% of the Squadron Officer School officers indicate they use the bar or lounge less than they used to due to DWI emphasis.

One positive area for club use is a reliance on a club for eating and socializing while at a temporary duty location. Two-thirds of the Air War students, 53% of Air Command and Staff, and 45% of Squadron Officer School students rely on the club while TDY. Membership in a base officer club translates to membership in a worldwide network of clubs. Proximity to billeting facilities offers further conveniences for the TDY officer.

Club Importance While the Air Force has gone on record stating there are three missions for open mess activities (wartime/emergency messing; protocol, community, and official functions; and social recreation), officers list only one of the three as important reasons for clubs. Essential feeding ranked second from the bottom of ten choices for club importance, with only one percent of Air War College students, two percent of SOS students and no ACSC students listing it as the primary reason. Essential feeding appeared in the top three reasons for importance only two percent of the time for all three schools.

On the other hand, protocol, community and official functions ranked first among the three schools. Forty-five

percent of the AWC, 38% of ACSC, and 26% of SOS ranked this area as the most important while 25%, 25%, and 19% respectively selected this reason in the top three choices.

Social recreation ranked in the middle of the possible reasons with 8%, 6% and 14% of AWC, ACSC and SOS students listing it as primary, and in the 10% range of top three responses. While ranked well below protocol and official functions as the primary reason for club importance, company grade officers feel this is an important aspect of the club.

It is interesting to compare how colonels, majors, and captains rank the primary reason for club importance. Protocol events clearly stand out as the prime reason for all three grades, however the more senior the officer the higher the ranking. Company grade officers rated a place for senior and junior officers to mix, and social recreation, as their second most important reason (tied at 14%), while AWC and ACSC officers ranked these areas lower at 8% and 6%. A place to meet peers ranked next for captains at 11%, with Air War and Air Command and Staff officers listing it at 8% and 7%. Significantly, the second most often stated response among the colonels and majors is that clubs are not important (14% AWC and 19% ACSC). This answer ranked fourth among captains at 13%.

Looking at how often officers listed the reasons in their top three responses shows that protocol and official functions ranked first among all three schools at 25%, 25% and 19%. A place to meet peers came in second for all three schools at 15%, 16%,

and 18% for AWC, ACSC, and SOS. A place for senior and junior officers to mix placed third for colonels and captains at 13% and 11%, with majors listing this reason low at 8%. Clubs are not important ranked third among Air Command and Staff officers at 12%, and fourth for Air War College (10%) and Squadron Officer School (11%).

Having the survey participants list why they feel clubs are important had some enlightening responses, particularly in what was not rated high. The most important reason for an officer club is not to enhance esprit de corps or unit identity or meet as a group of professional officers but to provide a place for protocol, community, and official functions. Maybe for the lack of those more traditional reasons, a large percentage of officers state that officer clubs are not important or necessary.

Consolidation of officer and non-commissioned officer clubs for financial survival has mixed reviews among the officers. A consolidated club that physically allowed for mixed dining, drinking, and other socializing won approval among 21% of the colonels and lieutenant colonels, 22% of the majors, and 31% of the captains. A more acceptable arrangement would be a collocated club that had separate areas for officers and non-commissioned officers to dine, drink and dance. Fifty-four percent of the Air War College officers, 52% of the Air Command and Staff students, and 57% of the Squadron Officer School officers agreed with this concept in the face of financial survival. These questions however prompted margin comments that the officer club should be

closed before combining with non-commissioned officers.

Capability of The Club Manager Officers from all three schools had a low level of confidence in the capability of club managers. Only 21%, 24%, and 18% of the Air War College, Air Command and Staff College, and Squadron Officer School students feel managers are quite capable of managing club assets and resources. Write-in comments, particularly among senior officers, pivoted on the need to fire managers who can't manage a successful club and only hire those with proven skills in restaurant and club management.

One question asked if monies from the other MWR activities on base should be used to offset financial losses of an officer club. While the single fund concept would allow the transfer of monies from one MWR activity to another, there is an ethical question involved if monies generated from predominately enlisted sources (e.g. airmen clubs) were to fund an elite officer function. Eighty-three percent of the Air War College students felt this money transfer should not occur, as did 80% and 77% of the Air Command and Staff and Squadron Officer School students. A club manager will have to succeed on his operation alone, and cannot rely on alternative sources of money from the MWR fund.

## CHAPTER V

### DO WE NEED OFFICER CLUBS?

This is a difficult question whose answer must take into consideration military traditions, professional requirements, location, and social needs of the officer members--active, reserve, or retired.

#### Traditional Reasons for Officer Clubs

Clubs were initially established to provide leisure and relaxation for the military at isolated locations. They have long been a meeting place for military officers--individuals who had chosen the military as a profession. Clubs have been elite, in that only commissioned officers (and more recently officer equivalents) could belong and use them. Frequently, they were an extension of work relations, with the officer and spouse's (usually wife) social life revolving around military society. Often clubs were, and are, the social entertainment for bases in isolated areas of the United States, and clubs brought a touch of Americana to remote and foreign locations. Membership in a club allowed access to a worldwide network of officer clubs, particularly important for officers on temporary duty.

### Are Clubs Important?

Those traditional reasons for officer clubs serve as a basis for existence today, and clubs have evolved into the present club system aimed at wartime and essential feeding, protocol and official functions, and social recreation for officers and guests. Patron use today would indicate how successful clubs are in meeting these missions as well as in attracting officers to its activities. Generally speaking, and based on club use, clubs are important in priority order (1) when TDY (2) at short tour bases (3) at long tour locations and (4) at stateside bases.

Short Tours Oversea clubs more closely parallel the traditional reasons for club existence as they are usually in environments foreign to United States citizens or isolated from communities and their support. Short tour locations offer the strongest arguments for clubs. By definition remote locations lack the support structure to permit dependents, and typically airmen work six days a week. With no family to turn to, officers can look to clubs as an outlet from the long hours. Clubs become a convenient place to relax with fellow officers sharing the hardships of an isolated tour, and are a positive alternative to less wholesome behavior that may be found off base. Additionally, club settings offer a piece of americana to troops on foreign soil. Clubs should have better sanitation controls than off base restaurants and bars, allaying any concerns on what can or cannot be consumed.



Admittedly the survey results for officers from short tour locations are based on small numbers, but club use at short tour locations supports this greater need for clubs than at ConUS locations. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are eaten in the club considerably more often. On average each month, colonels eat there 3.3 times for breakfast (0.05 in ConUS), 11.5 times for lunch (2.5 in ConUS), and seven times for dinner (0.9). Captains rarely use it for breakfast but slightly increase use over ConUS clubs for lunch and dinner at 3.2 and 1.3 times respectively. Official functions at the clubs are more prevalent at short tour sites with 2.5 a month for colonels (1.8 in ConUS) and once for captains (0.6). Again for colonels, check cashing is higher (4.3 times a month versus 1.8), as is social drinking at 7.0 to 0.1. Check cashing for captains rose slightly to 2.5 while social drinking remains low at 1.4 times a month.

Long Tours Depending on the country, long tour locations have similar factors as those mentioned for short tour areas that make clubs important to the officers. Some differences are five days a week work schedules, families are present, as are supporting activities and communities for social recreation. Cost of living and exchange rates can make clubs more attractive than off base establishments.

Generally, club use at accompanied locations is lower than at remote bases, but higher than stateside clubs. Colonels use the club slightly more for breakfasts (0.3 versus 0.05 times a month), dinners (1.7 to 0.9), social drinking (2.1 to 1.5) but

less often for lunch (1.7 to 2.5). Official functions, check cashing and dancing have similar levels as stateside clubs. Majors tend to use the overseas club more for lunch (4.1 at a long tour to 2.4 in ConUS), more check cashing (2.2 to 1.4) and slightly more social drinking (1.4 to 1.0). Official functions, breakfast, dinner, and dancing have similar usage for majors. Captains use overseas clubs more often than stateside clubs for every function. Lunch is higher at 4.4 times a month overseas long versus 2.9 at ConUS, dinner at 1.9 against 0.5, social drinking at 2.7 versus 1.4, official functions at 1.1 versus 0.6, and check cashing at 4.5 against 2.1 times a month in the ConUS.

Club Use in General Overall, clubs are not used by its members very often. This fact comes into focus when you consider that members paid \$23 million in dues in 1988 yet spent only \$77 million on food, beverages, and other purchases. (7:1) Deductively, overseas clubs are more important than stateside clubs, yet some clubs at long and short tour locations lose money and also have limited use. The officers polled listed protocol and official functions as the prime reason for an officer club, yet they attend on average, one or less official functions per month. Few officers considered the club an essential dining facility with only two or three breakfasts a year, lunch at two or three times a month, and dinner less than once a month. Enjoying the camaraderie of fellow officers, whether it be through social drinking or dining, was not evident when considering how infrequently the clubs are used for those events. Not

surprisingly, this low use among officers prompted a large number to say clubs are no longer necessary. Clearly, there is a mismatch between reasons for the club and use of the club--either clubs in general are not providing the professional and social outlets the officers seek, the environment has changed where those services can more readily be found outside the club, and/or the values of the officers have changed.

#### The Changing Environment

Over the years clubs have had to keep pace with a changing military and social environment involving a mobile officer corps, their families, the types and availability of entertainment sought, and societal swings from one decade to the next.

The picture of a typical officer and his family is much different today than once traditionally thought. The line of the Air Force was exclusively male and by 1979 four percent of the line force were female. Today they comprise nine percent of the line officers. (11:n/a) While the number of married officers remains constant in the 75 percent range, (11:n/a) those who were married seldom had a spouse working full-time outside the home. The number of spouses with full-time employment has grown steadily from 26% in 1975 to 44% in 1983 to 49% in 1986 (the latest information AFMPC has). (12:n/a) This increase of full-time working spouses equates to more income for the family and probably more expensive tastes in the goods and services they demand. Spouse employment may mean a second set of social obligations and

a new circle of friends for the officer's family. Additionally, a working spouse with children may translate to child care during the day, evenings of housekeeping, and a tendency for family activities during free time.

Club use is most convenient for officers living on base. More officers however are integrated in the community with 76% living off base in 1986, up from 68% in 1983. (12:n/a) During the same timeframe, officers who own their home have risen from 38% to 54%. (12:n/a) Reduced personnel budgets have meant less permanent change of station moves, and with the prospect of five years on station, more officers will look to move off base for investment or tax purposes. All of these factors point to an officer and his or her spouse less socially involved with the traditional military society, and more with their home, church, and new circles of friends springing from the off base community.

While there is no qualitative data to support it (13:n/a) civilian communities have grown around--even encroached--military bases in the ConUS. Military installations that were literally isolated from the nearest city or town now find a supportive (and from a club's perspective, competing) community at their front gates. Randolph Air Force Base is a good illustration. Aerial photography taken in the 1930s when it was built shows miles and miles of pastures with no civilization in sight. Today, Universal City lines the approaches to Randolph AFB with five miles of seemingly every fast-food chain restaurant in America, bars and lounges, and other service related businesses. These

establishments not only cater to off base personnel but are attractive social alternatives for officers living on base.

These demographic trends are indications of a shift in philosophy on the military way of life--a swing from a largely institutional military society to one less institutional and more occupational. While it is difficult to definitively measure changing values among the officer corps, there are some studies that offer evidence that officers view the military more as an occupation than as a professional institution.

A 1986 study by Charles Moskos of Northwestern University does present clues that this shift has or is occurring. For example, Dr. Moskos examines variables of a military organization and lists attributes of those variables for institutional and occupational settings. When you apply Air Force trends to those attributes, one could conclude the Air Force has become more occupationally minded and less institutional. Dr. Moskos argues "societal regard" in an institutional organization is reflected by esteem based on notions of service and professionalism. In an occupational organization, it is linked to prestige based on levels of compensation and technical expertise. (15:9a) Defining success as advancement in rank and other careerist thoughts heard in the 1970s and 1980s indicate officers think more occupationally than institutionally. "Role commitments" in an institutional organization tend to be diffuse and generalist. In an occupational setting they are specialized and specific. (15:12) The Officer Professional Development concept stresses training and

experience at base level in one specific career field for eight or more years. Institutionally "sex roles" limit employment, require segregation, and restrict career patterns. Occupationally, sex does not restrict employment, integration is apparent and career patterns are open for both sexes. (15:9a and 13) The increases in female officers in the line Air Force, and removing restrictions on career paths are moves toward occupationalism. "Spouses" institutionally are an integral part of the military society, but are removed from the military community in an occupational environment. (15:9a and 13) The increasing number of spouses with full-time employment results in less time for involvement in a military society. The recent policy decision that a working spouse has no detrimental effect on the officer's career is another step closer to an occupational society. "Residence" in the institutional organization is adjacent to work, frequently on base, and marked with numerous relocations. In an occupational environment, residence is separated from work, use of civilian housing is prevalent, and permanence in those civilian houses is more likely. (15:9a and 12) The trend in home ownership and living off base suggests more occupationalism. Finally, "reference groups" in the institutional organization are vertical within the armed forces; they are horizontal with occupations outside the military in the occupational model. (15:9a) This may be the cumulative result of the other attributes, with officers and their families relating more to external groups than they used to. One theory is that military members increasingly identify with

civilian counterparts (15:38) and the general trend is toward military officers who see themselves as specialists in uniform--a shift from the institutional view as "military professionals" to one of "professionals in the military." (15:39)

What do changing values mean to the officer club? Officers are less apt to seek out the club as the place to meet with fellow professional officers. Their priorities will be spread over more personal aspects of their life highly intertwined with the civilian sector. The institutional side of the officer tells him to join the officer club; the occupational side has him pursue interests off base and take his or her business elsewhere.

Changes in society have also impacted club services and business. Gone are the days when go-go dancers and strippers were an acceptable form of entertainment. Increased emphasis on drinking and not driving has deglamorized alcohol use. Casual attire for dining and entertainment are more prevalent.

### The Answer

Do we need officer clubs? If clubs continue to function traditionally as they do today, the answer is no. They are not used enough by the patrons to warrant herculean efforts to keep them alive. The officer's social needs have changed over time where they no longer are satisfied by the club alone, particularly when assigned stateside in a populated area. On the other hand, there are valid needs that a club system can meet, particularly for officers who are TDY or overseas. Some middle ground may be

found. The congressional direction could be a blessing in disguise, one that forces the Air Force to re-examine the officer club concept and purposes. Hopefully what emerges will be a club system that balances the institutional needs of the Air Force, and one where officer patrons have fun and want to use frequently.

Ideally, a revised club system would retain some traditional elements, support officers away from their home base, and meet the social needs of the officers and their families. The next, and final chapter offers recommendations on how to change the existing club system more towards these ends.



## CHAPTER VI

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Club survival without appropriated support will require a fresh look at club policies, procedures and practices. First, the mission of officer clubs should be re-defined and narrowed so clubs only strive to perform their intended purpose. Second, efforts should be made to make individual clubs within the present system profitable. Failing that, commanders have the options of either scaling back the services the club offers, consolidating or collocating with the NCO club, seeking a commercial firm to manage the officer club as a business, or closing it. Finally, a different system involving conference centers, billeting, and restaurants may be in order for the future.

#### A Re-Defined Mission

The three-fold mission of clubs today is too broad; encompassing essential and wartime feeding, a suitable location for protocol and other official functions, and social recreation for officers and guests. Instead, officer clubs should focus on meeting officer needs and exist to (1) provide for the social recreation and entertainment of officers and guests (2) allow for fellow officers to meet and congregate as a group and (3) provide a network of clubs for worldwide support of officers.

The survey results clearly indicate essential feeding is rarely done at officer clubs, with few dinners and much fewer breakfasts served. Feeding of troops is one of the basic missions of base commanders, and with no appropriated funds to provide this function, officer clubs should step away from the requirement. Alternative dining on and off base is available to officers, and base commanders can so designate.

The second traditional mission of providing a place for official functions falls more into "how clubs are used" versus "why they exist." It should not be a mission of officer clubs. While many clubs today do offer suitable surroundings for protocol and community events, these activities do not necessarily need to be held in officer clubs. Other locations on and off base are used today without detracting from the official function. Again, with no appropriated dollars, clubs should not be required to meet this present mission area. This thought comes into play with the last recommendation of developing a new system of conference center complexes.

Without these two traditional missions, officer clubs can focus on their primary functions of providing social recreation in a facility where officers can meet informally. Ideally, each Air Force base will have an officer club affording individual officers membership into a worldwide network of clubs.

#### Option 1: Manage Clubs So They Are Profitable

Retaining the current officer club system has its positive

and negative features. Clubs are a traditional and institutional part of the Air Force that should not be abandoned without an all-out effort to make the system work. Also, there is a sizeable investment in equipment and facilities that should be protected. On the negative side, without appropriated dollars there is a potential that individual member costs will increase dramatically. Additionally, financial survival will undoubtedly translate to policy changes that some factions of the membership may not like. Saving the present club structure will require broad changes in two general areas: improve club management and increase club use.

Improve Club Management It is essential that all aspects of club management be polished if clubs are to run as a business. Club operations and policies must be established that meet the patrons needs and be in the long term financial interests of the club. There are five specific recommendations in this area: the base commander's role, the club manager's role, continuing AFMPC's efforts, consolidating club overhead functions, and maximizing recycling efforts.

The senior commander on a base or the base commander play important roles in officer club operations. Most often their inputs are helpful; occasionally they micro-manage or force their views onto the manager or officer patrons of the club. In an environment of running a business that needs to generate a profit, the commander's role must be put into the proper context. His or her most important task is hiring a qualified club manager, and not settling for a less capable candidate. This may take several

rounds with the civilian personnel community, and even higher headquarters involvement to change restrictive hiring policies. It is essential however that the right person be hired as the manager. The next task facing the commander is to appoint a club advisory council in proportion with the eligible population across grades and units. Finally, the commander must have faith in the manager and the advisory council to make sound decisions, and give them the authority and support to do so.

The club manager is the linchpin in the equation of a successful and profitable club. As mentioned above, he or she must have the tools to manage all facets of the club. Equally important, the manager must have the leeway to make decisions in the best interests of the patrons and the financial picture. Armed with the authority and leeway to make policy decisions, there should be no hesitation by the commander or club manager to directly link the manager's performance ratings to club profitability. For example, a critical element of a club manager's job would be to make a profit. If the club is profitable then the manager met or exceeded that standard, and his or her performance rating would range from satisfactory to superior depending on the level of profits and other rating factors. If however the club lost money due to circumstances under the manager's control, a marginal or unsatisfactory rating is in order. This arrangement should motivate the manager towards a successful and fiscally sound operation, while underscoring the requirement that the club manager must have the authority to

manage all aspects of the club.

A good club manager must understand the needs of his patrons and expand or streamline programs to meet them. Bases with a high number of bachelorons may opt for more lunch buffets, where quantity takes a seat ahead of quality. Do the officers want a gourmet dining room with ten or more higher priced entrees, or would two or three that chefs can make superbly suffice? Does the dining room need to operate six nights a week, or do use patterns suggest only four are needed? Club managers need to get out of the club and into the squadrons to determine what officer needs are. While the advisory council does represent all members, there may be other ideas the manager needs to hear.

The manager and advisory council must work closely on the short and long term policies and decisions of the club. If for example, weekday breakfast is a rarely attended event and a money loser for the club, they may decide to cancel it except for special functions like monthly chamber of commerce meetings. Here the manager must walk a fine line and present his conclusions to the base commander so decisions on non-availability of messing for officers can be made, decisions that involve daily subsistence rates and dining hall operations. The council and the manager might also recognize a need for improvements like new carpets or wallpaper in the club. Where in the past this may have been directed by commanders, with no alternative sources of funds the financial solvency of the club must be considered first. Again the manager will walk a fine line, this time balancing a necessary

improvement project that will attract more patrons against the financial realities--these decisions will become more methodical.

The Morale, Welfare and Recreation directorate of the Air Force Military Personnel Center has been addressing club survival for several years now. Many innovations and positive suggestions have been collected through conferences and working groups involving commanders and club managers. These ideas have been forwarded to bases in documents titled Tools For Survival, and include management tips on the full spectrum of club operations and management. Specific success stories, quality improvements in both food and service, training of all club personnel, central purchasing of club supplies and many more suggestions are covered so club managers have access to a continuous crossfeed of information and new ideas. Additional efforts are planned and must continue as the clubs transition into a totally business environment.

One area club managers may look at to save resources is in club overhead operations. Bases with officer, non-commissioned officer, and airmen clubs may have duplication in overhead functions like purchasing, catering, personnel and accounting. Consolidation may result in economies in larger purchasing power and fewer employees. The last recommendation in improving club management is to maximize the base recycling program and steer proceeds to the business activities of the base MWR programs. For example, clubs should only purchase beer and soft drinks in aluminum cans, and recycle the empties for a direct cash

reimbursement. Proceeds from other recycling programs on a base wide scale can be directed by the base commander to MWR and energy programs. This may be an untapped source of funds that also serves to better dispose of waste.

Increase Club Use This is the key to success. There is little room for improvement in membership levels between 88% and 92% of the active duty force belonging to their club. There is, however, substantial room for improvement in how often clubs are used. Clubs are rarely used by the average officer and dramatic increases will be necessary to make clubs profitable. Recommendations on how to increase club use fall into two areas--irritating policies should be removed or diminished, and commanders need to hold more of their functions at the officer club.

Generally speaking, officer clubs serve three audiences: senior officers, junior and middle grade officers, and retirees. Each group has its own social needs and what they feel are appropriate standards for a club and club events. Changing club policies to attract one group may be at the expense of the others, and club managers may need to allow less formal standards in certain parts of the club to simultaneously attract and satisfy each group. While retirees are an important part of an officer club, intuitively officer clubs need active participation from the large numbers of company and field grade officers to survive financially. Club policies and practices set into motion by senior officers may well determine the levels of participation and

use by the majority of club patrons--the lieutenants, captains, and majors who comprise 83% of the active duty Air Force. The survey results indicate club dues, a stuffy atmosphere, and pressure to belong detract from club use. Positive steps can be taken in each to allay these concerns without detracting from the club environment.

Dues should be pro-rated by grade and directly linked to club use--the more money an officer spends in the club, the less monthly dues he or she pays. This method would allow for higher dues while softening any backlash effect. For example, dues for active and retired officers would be \$12 a month for lieutenants, \$15 for captains, \$18 for majors, \$20 for lieutenant colonels, \$22 for colonels, and \$25 for generals. Actual dues owed the club in a given month would depend on how much money the officer spent at the club that month. Consider the chart below.

Charges	Dues Owed	Lt	Capt	Maj	LtC	Col	Gen
none	100%	\$12	\$15	\$18	\$20	\$22	\$25
\$ 25	75%	\$ 9	\$11.25	\$13.50	\$15	\$16.50	\$18.75
\$ 50	50%	\$ 6	\$ 7.50	\$ 9	\$10	\$11	\$12.50
\$ 75	25%	\$ 3	\$ 3.75	\$ 4.50	\$ 5	\$ 5.50	\$ 6.25
\$100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

If the club was not used one month, the officer would owe one month's dues. If however the officer spent \$50 one month, he would only owe one-half of his monthly dues. A \$100 monthly bill would be rewarded with no monthly dues. This system would spread the burden of club dues more proportionately by grade with pro-rated dues, and encourage frequent club use. Accounting could be programmed into the billing computers and the "coupon"



system frequently used by clubs today would be eliminated.

Club atmosphere can be enhanced by introducing different standards for different areas of the club. The survey results indicate club dining rooms should not be casual, while lounges should be. Dress codes for the dining room can vary. All duty uniforms should be allowed for lunches, and civilian dress should restrict blue jeans, shorts and other casual attire. Similar rules should apply for dinner. Individual clubs may want to designate one night a week (Saturday) for more formal dining where coat and tie would be required. Dress in the bar would be casual where jeans, sneakers, and other casual clothes are welcome. Officers and guests in casual attire could not enter the dining room but sandwich, salad, pizza, and menu service in the bar would meet this need. Bartenders and waitresses would take food orders that would be prepared in the club kitchen and taken to the bar. Behavior in the bar would be in line with the casual atmosphere. Contemporary music and noise would be permitted, allowing an officer to unwind, even blow off steam. This may call for a second bar area for officers and guests who may feel more comfortable in a quieter and dressier setting. If a club has a traditional Friday "happy hour," a system permitting single civilians of drinking age into the club should be pursued. These combined efforts should entice the younger officer to use the club rather than go off base to unwind, while still maintaining higher standards for other areas of the club.

Direct or indirect pressure to belong to the club should

be removed. Officers should want to belong and use their club, not feel threatened if they don't. Club membership has nothing to do with an officer's duty performance and potential for advancement, and monitoring club membership for these purposes should stop. A commander should be concerned that a club is not attracting membership, and work to correct those reasons rather than hold it against officers who elect to not join. Said another way, if the club meets the social needs of the officers, the vast majority will join; if officers don't belong, the problem may not be the officers. Changing this actual or perceived mindset can best be done with a Chief of Staff letter to commanders, outlining the revised mission of clubs, voluntary membership aspects, and other policy changes to improve clubs.

The last recommendation in improving club use is not a new one. Commanders at all levels need to steer more functions toward the club. Commander's call, Christmas parties, squadron meetings, conferences and other gatherings can be handled by most clubs, but are often held elsewhere. Commanders need to ascertain why the club was not chosen and work with the manager to correct any problems. Finally, official events held at the officer club must be open to members and non-members of clubs alike to avoid pressures to join.

Many comments from the survey dealt with the need to vastly improve the quality of food and service. Club managers must insist on quality from all levels of the operation. Regardless of dues, atmosphere, and an absence of pressure to

belong, officers will simply not be attracted to a club that offers average food and service.

#### Option 2: Determine Fate of Unprofitable Clubs

With sound management practices and a marked increase in club use, individual base officer clubs should become financially sound operations. If however the officers do not support the club at profitable levels, commanders will be faced with decisions on changing to a different structure. For a variety of reasons ranging from that base's location, where the officers live, the degree that the surrounding community meets the officers needs, and others, that base may not be able to support a viable officer club. In those cases, there are four options for commanders. It is recommended that these options be considered in this order. First, consider dramatically scaling back the services of the officer club, eliminating costly and seldom used events. A second option is to collocate the officer and non-commissioned officer clubs. A third option is to have a commercial firm manage the officer club as a business. Finally, if neither of these options are possible, the commander must seriously consider closing the officer club. Each option has its positive and negative features and are reviewed below.

Scaling back club operations has been briefly discussed in the first option of improving club management. Aside from initial cutbacks like no longer providing breakfast, clubs may need to take more drastic measures. Use patterns for a particular base

may indicate that the club need not be open weeknights at all, or that a lounge with sandwich or cook-your-own steak service is all that is necessary. A scaled back club would directly affect support for TDY officers, and could steer them off base for eating and social activities.

Consolidation and collocation with other base clubs has been tried at Air Force bases before. Short of closing the officer club, it is attractive in that it extends the life of the officer club and provides a location on base for officers to socialize. Yet it has several drawbacks. Clearly a consolidated club breaks from tradition by merging officer and NCO social centers into one operation. The survey of officers indicates a joint facility with mixed socializing is favorable to only 21 to 31 percent of the officers. A more palatable arrangement would be a collocated facility with separate social areas, with slightly more than half of the officers accepting this configuration. Many however felt clubs should be closed before consolidating or collocating. Views of the NCO and airmen are not available, but one would expect they would not want officers in view when they wanted to relax and socialize.

The Air Force Chief of Staff issued a policy on joint use of club facilities in December 1989. The new policy recognizes "when population, location, businesslike principles, or other factors make it impractical or unprofitable, we must consider some form of facility joint-use or sharing to assure economies...Operations that do not permit at least separate bar

activities are discouraged. The installation commander can establish shared activities only when it does not disrupt good order and discipline and is essential for self-sustainment of the club program at the base."

The Chief of Staff policy outlines two configurations for collocated clubs. The first maintains separate facilities for officer and enlisted. For economy reasons, commanders may establish certain functions as joint-use, and offer them only in one facility. Separate dining areas for dinner should be maintained, while every effort should be made to have separate dining areas for other meals. The second configuration involves a single facility for officers and enlisted, and should be considered if the first configuration failed to improve viability. Within the single facility scenario, the policy allows for three options. The first has separate bar and dining areas sharing a single kitchen, and party rooms and ballrooms for separate social activities. The second option recognizes smaller sized units may not be able to support separate dining areas, and allows a combined eating area. Bars will continue to be separate. The final option is intended for very small units, usually at sites as opposed to bases. As a last resort, commanders may combine dining and bar areas for joint use by officers and enlisted. This joint use policy is straightforward and offers commanders an option short of closing the officer club. Another option not addressed by the Chief of Staff is to contract the officer club operation.

If officer clubs are to be run as business ventures, the commercial world may offer a better option than consolidation. There is a general feeling among officers, one supported by the survey, that club managers are not equipped to manage the club properly. Whether that is the case, or a base cannot support its own club, a civilian operation run by professionals would be an alternative short of closing the officer club. This option retains the single facility for officers, and only breaks from tradition in that the club would not be managed by Air Force personnel. A club managed as a business would demand a higher level of service and improvements in food which may lead to higher prices. The best feature of a contract operation is it would serve as a final test on whether a base could support an officer club. If the club fails under both the present system and manager, and then while managed by competent professionals, clearly the officer clientele do not want or need the services of a club.

Identifying potential contractors to manage the club can be done locally or centrally by AFMPC or the major commands. Local talent may be available to take on this task. A better test would be to have AFMPC approach large corporations like Hilton or Marriott to determine if there is interest in officer club operations. Tests of the contract option could be performed at bases that historically lose money in officer clubs. The corporation could use the present facility and send in their management team that would determine the type of service the base

needs, and establish their own programs accordingly. If they are successful in meeting the base's needs and are profitable, they would continue operations and expand to other unprofitable locations. If however, after a specified period of time their programs do not generate enough support or profits, they would cease operations and absorb any losses.

At this stage, a commander is faced with a difficult decision--close the officer club. This act would be a clean break from tradition and remove that base from a network of clubs to support officers worldwide. However, if all other options have been exhausted, then it is time to recognize the club is a dinosaur whose time has come. Closure should occur in two phases. First, close the club and "pickle" the facility. Social and official functions should be scheduled for other locations, and operate in this fashion for a year. At that time, assess the impact of operating without a club, both on the officers of that base and in terms of impact on commander activities. If there is no groundswell of support for a separate club and the impact on operations has been small, then permanently close the officer club and use the facility and equipment for other pressing base needs. At this stage, and somewhat ironically, a commander may want to open a small, private and austere after-duty lounge similar to the original officer club concept of 100 years ago.

#### Option 3: A Conference Center Concept

The last option for consideration is to develop and transition toward a new concept of official activity and social

support for a base. As present day officer club buildings become older, they will demand costly facility care and eventual replacement. New clubs can only be built with non-appropriated dollars, and the Welfare Board at AFMPC prioritizes the individual base requirements and submits the most pressing ones for funding. The new three-tiered structure of MWR and its associated rules on levels of appropriated support may result in less NAF dollars available for new construction of MWR activities. If club use remains low at a base needing a new building and profitability for the club is tenuous, the Welfare Board may conclude a NAF loan for constructing a new officer club is not in the best interests of that base or the Air Force. In this scenario, separating nice to have but not essential missions from clubs may lead to a solution.

Since Congress has directed that clubs no longer receive appropriated dollars, it stands to reason that clubs should no longer support any activity that would normally be funded with appropriated dollars. Official activities directly related to accomplishing the military mission should occur outside NAF activities. The survey data supports the notion that each base needs some vehicle to meet its official protocol and community functions, and that officers (particularly when TDY) need a place for social dining and relaxation. A conference center complex with billeting support built with APF, and a contract restaurant and bar using NAF dollars would meet those needs. This concept, described in more detail below, may or may not include the present officer club.



The motive of this concept is to realign present day club activities into more appropriate activities, thereby freeing the officer club of secondary missions. First, each base (and particularly large bases with headquarters functions) has a number of official conferences and meetings involving permanent party and TDY officers and civilians. Depending on the size of the base and the number of official events it hosts, a case could be made that a conference center is needed. Second, recognizing that transient officers may lack transportation, billeting is normally within walking distance to the officer club and its dining room. Additionally, billeting is open 24 hours a day to accommodate travellers day or night. Visiting officer quarters usually have limited food and bar items available to the travelling officer. These functions could be combined into one building to meet those needs--separate from the club.

Assume, for example, a base has an appropriated fund major construction project for a 120 person visiting officer quarters (VQQ). Also assume that base has documented a need for a small conference center. Design for that structure should combine the two requirements, with the ground floor housing the lobby, billeting desk, several small conference rooms, one ballroom-size room, a lounge, and a restaurant--everything a traveling officer needs for his official visit under one roof. The base would also benefit from a location to host official, protocol, and community functions in setting designed for those purposes.

Including the lounge and restaurant in this arrangement

introduces non-appropriated fund activities into the building, and there are several ways to arrange it. One is to contract all of the billeting operation to a professional hotel firm like Hilton. A hotel complex could be built on base, with all facets of the operation managed by professional hotel personnel from Hilton. Breakfast, lunch, dinner, room service, lounge hours, entertainment and more would be tailored to that specific base's needs. All activities in the visiting officer quarters would also be open for use by all base officer personnel and their guests.

A variation on the commercial hotel concept would be to have an appropriated fund VOQ with conference rooms and a separate commercial restaurant on base. This restaurant could be along the lines of "Steak and Ale", "Red Lobster", or "Sizzler" and would be open to all base personnel. The restaurant would cater to the conference center in the VOQ or operate a small kitchen in the complex to handle room service and after hour snacks.

Another variation would be to have the base restaurant or Hilton-like conference center man and run an officer club kitchen.

Consider now the original premise that the base needed a new officer club building yet the Welfare Board couldn't fund or the base couldn't repay a NAF loan. With this VOQ-conference center complex, the officer club would be freed from the missions of essential feeding, and providing a location for official and protocol functions. Instead it could concentrate on meeting the social needs of the officers--at this hypothetical base, maybe a new building would no longer be required. Maybe only a private

lounge with bar snacks and sandwich items, and a dining room for lunches are all that are required.

This final option has positive and negative features. On the plus side it could reduce the NAF funding requirement by downsizing clubs. It would also rely on appropriated dollars to build most of the conference center complex. This arrangement would continue to provide officers with a worldwide network of social support. Finally it would narrow the focus of officer club requirements where it could concentrate on meeting officer social needs. On the negative side, this is a clear break from tradition, and could spell the end of clubs as they are known today. A joint use restaurant on base would combine officer and NCO dining, another break from tradition.

If a new concept is not considered the best course of action, a commander faced with a valid unfunded requirement for a new officer club may be financially driven to otherwise less desirable ones. He may have to seriously consider consolidation of the officer and NCO club, either with new construction for segregated clubs under one roof or combining both into one of the existing clubs and using the limited construction money to alter the structure accordingly. Short of consolidation, the commander may be faced with the expensive prospect of putting more and more maintenance and repair dollars (at the expense of other base facilities) into the old club to keep it in a useable condition.

### In Closing

The three options proposed for officer club survival cover the waterfront: make the present club system profitable, introduce elements of commercial contracting, collocate with NCO clubs, close them where they cannot be self supporting, and a long range option to deal with limited non-appropriated dollars for club construction. All the options require a distinct break from the way clubs are managed today, and will require an objective evaluation of each officer club. Near term survival of individual officer clubs can be reached if clubs change to attract more use by its patrons. Failing that, commanders should pursue the other options before deciding the club should be closed. The long term problem of funding new construction may however be insurmountable, leaving little choice but to design and transition towards a new concept of officer social service.

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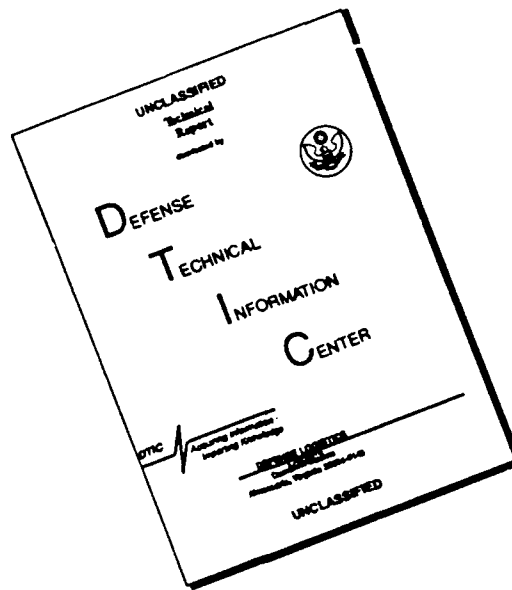
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## GLOSSARY

ACSC	Air Command and Staff College
AFB	Air Force Base
AFMPC	Air Force Military Personnel Center
AFF	Appropriated Funds
AWC	Air War College
CONUS	Continental United States
DWI	Driving While Intoxicated
MWR	Morale, Welfare and Recreation
NAPF	Non-Appropriated Funds
NCO	Noncommissioned Officer
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
OWC	Officer Wives Club
SOS	Squadron Officer School
TDY	Temporary Duty
VOO	Visiting Officer Quarters
USAF	United States Air Force

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